

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE MANUAL	
	Chapter 3: Intake	Effective Date: November 1, 2005
	Section 1: Receiving Calls (Overview)	Version: 1

POLICY

- The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) will be available to receive reports of child abuse/neglect (CA/N) 24 hours per day, 7 days per week.
 - DCS will operate a statewide, toll-free child abuse hotline (800-800-5556) as well as [local child abuse hotlines](#).
- DCS will receive oral and written (hard copy and electronic) reports and requests.
- DCS will record the date, time and purpose of every hotline call received.

Code References

- [IC 31-33-5: Duty to Report Child Abuse or Neglect](#)
- [IC 31-33-7: Receipt of Reports of Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect](#)
- [IC 31-33-18 Disclosure of Reports: Confidentiality Requirements](#)

PROCEDURE

The [intake worker](#) will complete the following steps for all calls received:

1. Record the date and time of the call
2. Engage with the caller in a courteous and professional manner
3. Actively listen to the reporter and take detailed notes
4. Make an initial determination about the nature of the call to be one of the following, record the purpose of the call, and take appropriate actions:
 - a. **CA/N allegations**
 - Proceed with creating a CA/N Intake Report, (see separate policy, [Creating a CA/N Intake Report](#)).
 - b. **Service Requests**
 - Proceed with creating a Service Request report (see separate policy, [Service Request Intake Reports](#)).
 - c. **Other calls**
 - **Out-of-State CA/N allegations:** Reports where the alleged CA/N occurred in another state will be transferred to the appropriate child welfare agency in that state. No further action required unless courtesy interviews are requested by the agency.
 - **Information only** (i.e., requesting the phone number of a local childcare provider): Provide the caller with the requested information. No further action required.
 - **Collateral information** for an open investigation (assessment) or case: Transfer the caller to the FCM who is assigned to the investigation (assessment) or case.

- **Inquiries** about the status of CA/N report, investigation (assessment) or case: See procedures in separate policy, [Sharing Confidential Information](#).
- **Complaints:** Refer the caller to the appropriate person by following the chain of command at the local DCS office, escalating only if previous complaints went unresolved (FCM supervisor, local DCS office director, regional manager).
- **Foster parenting inquiries:** Refer the caller to the person who handles licensing at the local DCS office or the [Indiana Foster Care and Adoption Association \(IFCAA\)](#), phone: 800-468-4228.
- **Adoptive parenting inquiries:** Refer the caller to the [Indiana Foster Care and Adoption Association \(IFCAA\)](#), phone: 800-468-4228.
- **Wrong numbers:** No further action required.

PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The Quality of the Intake Report Impacts Child Safety

Receipt of a call made to the child abuse hotline is the critical first step in the State's process of assuring the alleged victim's safety and due process. The importance of this step cannot be over-emphasized. How the call is handled and documented can have a significant impact on the next steps in the process. The quality of the information gathered impacts the ability of DCS to make a decision about whether or not the report will be assigned for investigation (assessment). The quality of the information gathered will also impact the ability of DCS to conduct an effective investigation (assessment).

Excellent Customer Service is Imperative

Calls placed to the child abuse hotline are often the only contact the community has with DCS. To the community, the intake worker provides the first impression of the level of public service available through DCS. A bad customer service experience may cause a caller to hesitate to make future CA/N reports. Therefore, the intake worker should always communicate with callers in a courteous and helpful manner.

Routing Collateral Information

If FCM assigned to the investigation (assessment) or case is not available and the caller is unwilling to leave voice mail or the call is of an urgent nature, record the caller's message as a contact or temporary contact in ICWIS and use an appropriate method to alert the FCM to the message (send an email to the FCM, call the FCM, etc.).

Transferring CA/N Intake Reports to Other States

The following page on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services web site may be helpful to locate contact information for child welfare agencies in other states:
www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/publications/slo.htm

FORMS AND TOOLS

- N/A

RELATED INFORMATION

Mandated Reporters

[IC 31-33-5-1](#)

Any individual who has reason to believe that a child is a victim of child abuse or neglect has the duty make a report, therefore, everyone in Indiana is considered a “mandated reporter.”

Professional Reporters

[IC 31-33-5-2, 3](#)

Professional reporters, as defined by Indiana Law, are members of the staff of a medical or other public or private institution, school, facility, or agency. These reporters are legally obligated to report the alleged CA/N to the person in charge of the organization for which they work and to make a report to DCS (unless they have assurances that a report has already been made to DCS).

Immunity of Persons Making CA/N Reports

[IC 31-33-6](#)

A person who makes a CA/N report is immune from any civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be imposed because of such actions.